

Center for Modern Greek Studies
Greek American Oral History Project
Transcription

Tape: A01

Subject: Ron Pavellas

Third Party: Artemis Pavellas

Interviewer: Peter Haikalis

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- I: This is a recording for the Oral History Project sponsored by the Center for Modern Greek Studies at San Francisco State University. Today I am going to be speaking to Ron Pavellas and his mother, Artemis Pavellas. This is Peter Haikalis, who will be conducting the interview. We'll start with Ron. And Artemis, if you want to chime in, feel free, but will also have conducting a separate interview after we're done with this one. So, why don't we start, and give us some sense of your background.
- R: All right, I was born in San Francisco, January 7th 1937. Lived with Mom and Dad throughout my childhood. My first recollections were on Arguello Boulevard, between Geary and Clement. And this was before the Second World War. I know that because of some specific incidence that happened later. I must have been around four-years-old. I lived in a household with my parents, it was a flat on 737, I think, Arguello Boulevard.
- I: Is that near the park?
- R: It was very near the park.
- A: Rossi Park.
- R: Well no, that was another place, Mom. That was when the Liberty- I think, wasn't it?
- A: I though it was Rossi Park.
- R: No, Golden Gate Park near Arguello.
- I: Golden Gate Park.
- A: Oh. Oh yeah. It was Golden Gate, you're right.
- R: Yeah, I was too young to remember Rossi Park.
- A: Yeah.
- <laughter>
- R: And I was in the house, the upper flat, were: Mom and Dad, Uncle Harry, Aunt Angie, Aunt Bee, and Grandpa.
- I: And that was all members of your mother's family?
- R: Correct. My dad had no siblings, and his parents were dead. Now, he did have a cousin. Still does. Nestor Palladius, and he lives in Seattle.

I: Can you spell his last name?

R: P-A-L-L-A-D-I-U-S.

I: Nestor.

R: Nestor. But his real name was Papageorge. That was Papageorge's <zerka? unintelligible {019}>. Oh yeah, we got to show you Papa George's vest over here. The vest of George Demetrius Papagiorgiou.

I: Mister Papageorge was your Grandfather's business partner?

R: Right, yeah. And anyway, Nestor—Papageorge, as I understand it from Dad, wanted give his son a more modern, non-Greek, or a Greek-sounding, but a more modern, maybe more American name. So he made up this thing called Palladius. So that's what Nestor's last name is.

I: I see.

R: And Nestor's never had any children.

I: Mh-hm. Is he still living?

R: He's living in Seattle with his second wife.

I: Okay.

R: Okay back to the flat. We lived there. Remember the when the war broke-up. There was a Japanese family living below us. Is that right mom?

A: Yes.

R: There was a little girl or boy, I think it was a boy, slightly younger than I or about my age. And I had heard about the war and the Japanese, and I--

I: You were about four or five-years-old?

R: Right. Five. Whenever that-I forget. The war started in '41. December 7, '41. So I was just about to be five-years-old, and I had some crackers in my mouth and I spit these crackers at the kid. And my mom took after me with a broom.

A: <laughs>

I: Well because he was Japanese.

R: Because he was—that's the only way I can figure that one out.

A: Well, there weren't many people. It was terrible. You know.

R: Yeah.

I: <laughs>

A: I couldn't imagine why you did it.

I: 'Cause he heard about-

R: Well I was a kid and I heard something I guess about Japanese bombing Pearl Harbor or something.

A: Oh, I see.

R: Anyway you took after me with a broom, and I cowered under that stove with legs and Uncle Harry rescued me.

I: <laughs>

R: You were really angry with me. And those people disappeared. I guess they went to the camps.

I: You remember them leaving?

R: I don't, no.

I: Do you remember them? <Addressed to Artemis>

A: No.

I: You don't remember them being taken away?

A: No, I don't.

I: Okay, so go on.

R: So then I remember that we had to save tin foil. It was real tin then. The gum-inside the gum, we used to make balls with. And then donate them to the war effort. I was a pretty lonesome kid. Even though, I'm introverted and I get along pretty well by myself. I was not getting socialized very well and Mom and Dad put me in this little nursery school, I guess, pre-kindergarten.

I: Was your sister born?

R: She was not born yet. She's five-and-a-half years younger than me.

I: Okay.

R: So, I was really happy to go to that school, but I didn't know how to act. My first day there, I made a big announcement about myself or did something. I got stuck in a corner.

<laughter>

R: I was too belligerent. Not belligerent, I was just happy. I didn't know how to behave. <laughs> And anyway, I remember, you know, that just happened one day. And remember going everyday, looking all over the place for lead and tin foil and stuff to take to school for the war effort. I got these rewards for that. And then Dad was working; I don't remember where, Mom. But um-

A: Is that <Karskis? {046}>?

R: I don't think so. Could he—as I recall Dad telling it, he-

A: Maybe he was at a juice store, orange juice store.

R: Well, was he working at the shipyard yet? Because we moved to Sunnydale.

A: Yeah, he could have been.

R: And he was already working in a shipyard then.

A: If that was during the wartime, he was in the shipyard.

R: Yeah, so my dad worked at the Richmond, Kaiser Shipyard.

I: Okay, and commuted from Sunnyvale to?

R: No, no from San Francisco, where we were living. Sunny-Sunnydale.

I: Oh! Sunnydale!

R: Sunnydale Avenue. That was where that housing project is. It was not a slum. It was brand new. Near Cow Palace. When we moved in, it was brand new. And I guess were eligible because Dad was a war worker. So he commuted from San Francisco to Richmond and back. I remember the tokens, the card stamps, and all the different things we had to save. We couldn't get butter, we had margarine. We were mixing the margarine color. That was my job you take the little capsule of color, mix it with white margarine and mix it to make it look like butter.

<laughter>

I have a memory written down about that time, I will give it to you in electronic form. Just a small memory. Any case I'm bouncing around here. I'm trying to finish up in Arguello. Dad loved the Oz Books, and he would go around the corner to Clement Avenue and go to a used bookstore and get the Oz Books. We were always very poor by the way. Dad was unemployed briefly during—he lost the newspaper. He was unemployed under Works Progress Administration Writer's Project, and he uh-

I: Did he participate in that project?

R: Did he?

I: Yep.

R: He did something, and I don't know what. Perhaps, Mom remembers.

A: Yeah, he wrote things, I know that. He was a wri-a person. He wanted to contribute for what he was getting, you know.

I: You don't remember what he wrote about?

A: No, I don't.

I: Okay.

R: And he never kept anything that I'm aware of. It might have been political, because he was in—He majored in Political Science at UC Berkeley. We'll get to him later. I'll continue about myself here.

I: Okay.

R: So in any case, he would read the Oz Books to me. I started stacking up. We may have two of the originals; they're just all crumbing. So I—And I learned to read very young that way. And Oz Books were a big part of my childhood, because it was fantasy world that had a lot reality in it. We all—at least Dad and I and Diane, and you too Mom, I don't know.

A: No, I didn't.

R: It was Mom and Dad, Diane and I—I mean Diane, Dad, and I got really into it.

I: Those books were like a series of books?

R: Yeah, L. Frank Baum wrote fourteen of them.

I: Okay.

R: There was character in there called Pessim that Dad identified with, a pessimist.

I: <laughs>

R: And that's why Dad likes Murphy's Law. If anything can go wrong, it will.
<laughs> That resonated with Dad. So, anyway, that's about as much as I can think. And Uncle Harry then was working as a sheet metal worker in um-

A: Hunter's Point.

R: Hunter's Point Shipyard, yeah.

I: He worked in a shipyard too?

A: Became a supervisor.

R: Yeah, worked there a long, long time. Then he retired out there.

I: So you're dad worked in a shipyard. So then what happened to you?

R: Then we moved to Sunnydale, and we lived there until 1945.

I: The end of the war.

R: Right. The war ended and uh-

A: I remember Franklin—it was Franklin Roosevelt wasn't it? No Theodore.

R: I think it was Franklin.

A: Franklin Roosevelt died. I'm telling you the whole place was sobbing you know and they rolled the trashcans down the street.

R: Yeah, it was a great morning for Roosevelt, like everybody lost their dad or grandfather.

A: That's the way I felt, I lost my dad.

R: So, anyway Sunnydale Avenue was a housing project. It didn't have the same negative connotation as it does now. We were happy to be there. Boy, it was a nice place, it had an upstairs and a downstairs.

A: It was, but it was in the pneumonia gulch.

I: <laughs>

R: Yeah it was. Oh yeah.

A: The mornings were beautiful, but the afternoon, windy and cold.

I: Candlestick Park is right next to it.

A: That's where he got his double mastoid.

R: Yeah, I got ear infections. I almost died from ear operations. And they didn't have antibiotics then. I got bone scraped out at the back of my ear. I remember Mom telling when she got me home from the hospital. I was about seven-years-old I think.

A: Yeah.

R: Seven or eight, seven maybe. And she was undressing me, and she said, I remember you telling me. She had to turn her face to compose herself, because I looked like one of those kids that were starving to death in Europe. I was so skin-and-bones.

A: Yeah. Oh yeah.

I: Emaciated.

R: Yeah. Now look at me.

<laughter>

I: It looks like you survived.

R: Yeah, and my Aunt Angie, in the mean while, had gone to nursing school and got her nursing certificate through her nursing school at Mount Zion in San Francisco. So, she and Mom nursed me back to health. Angie was always around she was the hovering angel, Angelina. And um-

I: So were they any Greek people at all in that uh Sunny-slope?

R: Sunnydale.

I: Sunnydale, excuse me.

R: It was Visitation Valley. Is where its at.

I: Do you recall any Greeks?

R: No, I don't. Do you, Mom?

A: I don't remember an awful lot of people there.

R: My best friend there was Michael Miller, whose dad was a correspondent for the Soviet Union News Agency, Itar-Tass. My dad reckoned that they were true Russian Communists, not a phony-American Communist. <laughs>

I: <laughs> Now you're father was rather left in his belief?

R: He was. He was actually active in the Socialist Labor Party in San Francisco. And he was Secretary, Treasurer or some office like that. I remember he once made a speech on the radio. Oh we were so proud. He was so good at it, extemporaneous speaking. He was very passionate in his beliefs, very well thought out as well. He remained a Socialist to his dying day.

I: He ever get into any trouble for that?

R: He imagined that he would, at one time. We were very fearful later in life when the McCarthy stuff was going on, because—I've jumped quite ahead here. We moved to New York subsequently, and we lived there for five years. And he to—in a fit of peak against a relative, which a story onto itself—he wrote an editorial in a Greek-Communist newspaper in New York, and then regretted it for the rest of his life, because he thought McCarthy would get him.

I: Oh.

<laughter>

R: Remember that Mom?

A: Oh yeah. I was terrified.

R: Oh, we were all terrified. We didn't know what was going to happen. Except we were such small potatoes that it never did.

I: <laughs> But still, all kinds of things, you never could tell what was going to go.

R: So anyway, Sunnydale. Mike Miller comes in later, I'll tell you about it. Well else to say about Sunnydale, Mom? I also had an appendectomy and a tonsillectomy.

A: Yeah.

R: I was just sick, sick, sick.

I: So that was four years of you being sick and they're all taking care of you. So where'd you go then?

R: Then at the end of '45, at the very end, Dad got a job with his cousin George Pavellas in New York, who owned a printing company.

I: I see.

R: And he either implied or stated that Dad could work himself into a partnership at his firm. And Dad jumped for it. He went first and we followed.

I: In New York City?

R: In Brooklyn. And so Dad went ahead and started working. And then Mom, Diane, and I traveled by train from San Francisco to New York. It was quite an adventure. I remember the endless flats through Nevada. And then we got to Central or Union Station or?

A: I don't remember.

R: Grand Central Station. That's where Dad met us at Grand Central Station. And remember we got on the subway and one of your bags popped open.

A: My button bag.

R: All your buttons went flying all over the place! <laughs> In the car and outside on the platform, we were scrambling around to pick up these buttons.

<laughter>

A: You know those people on that train? Not a smile. Not a smile. <laughs> As if we created a crime. They probably thought we were a bunch of foreigners <unintelligible { 138 }> carrying a sewing basket.

I: How long did you stay in New York?

R: Five-and-half-years, and I went to PS2 in Brooklyn. In other words, that was the second public school built in New York City. It was very old, three-story brick building.

I: What part of Brooklyn was it in?

R: Bay Ridge, it was a tuff neighborhood, 48th Street and 3rd Avenue. It was a lot of dock workers, and there was a navy yard near there, navy yard workers.

I: A lot of Scandinavians there.

R: No, there were some. There used to be a lot of Norwegians.

I: Yes.

A: Irish.

R: But by the time we got there, it was dominated mostly, the Irish and Italians.

I: So that's where you went to school.

R: I went to PS2, and I skipped grades, and um I was a smart kid.

I: And was your dad happy with arrangements that his business?

R: No. It became awful. It became a prison.

I: He didn't get what he expected?

R: No. It got to a point where he wanted to kill George. <laughs> Literal, he was getting just frantic. So he finally left there and he got a job at some other.

A: The thing is he went to New York to get a union, to get into a union, because he couldn't get in a union in San Francisco.

I: So he got into his union, and-

A: He got in a union and the minute he got in a union, he wanted to come back.
<laughs>

I: Oh, okay. He got his union card, and then he could go anywhere he wanted.

R: Yeah, that gave him his ticket back home.

I: So that's where he learned how to become a topographer?

R: No, he learned that when he had the newspaper. He inherited the newspaper from his dad, and I guess had helped him with the newspaper and various stuff before that. Dad always carried a printing press with him every time we moved, until we moved to New York. He would do odd jobs. He did beautiful work. Held special lacquers and posters and handles. He was a specialist, and he was a very good topographer and all the other arts related to that, arts and crafts. In fact in Sunnysdale, he was one of the founder of Consumers Cooperative there. And he had a pretty press basement there.

A: We got in trouble one time when he dug out a basement to put his press. The landlord was raving mad, said he was weakening the foundation.

<laughter>

I: It was a big press.

R: Yeah, and I remember in the basement of whatever we were in at the time, Dad had had these clotheslines, and then clipping the lacquered paper to it so it could dry. And all that smell, the ink and the lacquer, it was all very familiar to me.

I: And he didn't take the press to New York?

R: No. That was the end of that.

I: So he got his union card, and you guys were about ready to move.

R: Right. I just want to quickly go through my experience in Brooklyn. I went to junior high school, went to Stuyvesant Hos-<laughs> hospital. Stuyvesant High School for one semester. Then I went to High School of Music and Art for one semester.

I: And that was in Manhattan?

R: Manhattan. So was Stuyvesant.

A: He played piano, you know.

R: But I had had piano lessons from age four to fifteen.

I: So you were quite good.

R: Well I was good enough to get into High School of Music and Art, but I discovered that I didn't have what it took to become a real artist when I got there. I met folks that had the gift, and I realized I could never aspire. I couldn't achieve my own, the level of my own appreciation, that is to say.

A: But he sure did have the love for music though.

I: Well but it became not a vocation but an avocation.

R: It is, and I without regret gave it up. I play <unintelligible {176}> modern music.

A: He did regret it once, in the Army—

R: In the Navy.

A: In the navy. He says, "Mama, why did you let me give up piano?"

R: Did I say that?

A: Oh yeah, it was because you didn't want it, you know.
<laughter>

R: It was a momentary glitch I guess.

A: But I have a record of him playing "Mental Sings."

R: "Spinning Song."

A: "Spinning Song." It's really pretty. I said hey that's pretty good. <laughs>

R: It was pretty good, I had to admit. Then we took uh—Dad bought a 1939, Oldsmobile, paneled truck. And he moved us, household goods and all, across the United States.

I: And when was that?

R: In 1951.

I: So that was pretty old car that he had.

R&A: Yeah

I: Did it work okay?

A: It broke down once.

R: It broke down badly in Salt Lake City, and we had to stay there almost a week, I think.

A: Yeah.

R: While it was getting fixed.

I: So he bought it from his—was it his cousin?

R: Cousin, yeah.

I: He left after that to come back to New York and to come to California.

R: Yeah.

I: Because he had his car?

R: Yeah, then he went to work for the San Francisco Examiner, and we lived with

Uncle Harry and Aunt Sophie for about six months until we found a place.

I: Sophie is Harry's wife?

R: Oh, by the way, when we were in New York, Harry corresponded with relatives and friends in Greece for a wife. And he went and picked up—you know, stopped by to visit us on his way to Greece. Married Sophie Milanos.

I: That was her maiden name, Milanos?

R: Maiden name, uh-huh, and came back and stayed with us for a little bit, then went back home.

I: California.

R: To California, and lived on Silver Avenue for many, many years.

I: Now, he's passed away.

R: He's now dead, yeah.

I: And his wife?

R: She lives in Modesto, near—one of her daughters lives in Modesto.

I: Oh, okay. So, she's still living.

R: Yes.

I: Do you remember what part of Greece she came from?

A: Oh-jee, I don't remember. Was it Astros?

R: Was it the same place that your folks came from—your parents came from? Or maybe not.

A: Not everyone was too sure, where—<laughs>

R: Astros, I think.

I: Astros.

A: I think it was Astros.

I: Is that an island or a town?

R: I think it's a town in the Peloponnese.

I: Okay so anyway, let get on with the story.

R: Okay, so I went to Lowell High School for a year. And Dad wanted me to go to Berkeley High School, because that's where he went. So we moved to Berkeley, and I finished my last year of high school at Berkeley.

I: Where'd you live in Berkeley?

R: We lived in a cottage in the back of a house on Hillades Avenue. And then we moved to Channing Way, near Shattuck.

I: Okay, I know where that is.

R: And I graduated Berkeley High School in 1953 when I was sixteen.

I: Mh-hm.

R: And I was very disaffected, not socialized well at all. Too smart and nowhere to put it.

I: And during this whole period, you had really no contact with Greek people?

R: Um-yes.

I: Perhaps except the ones that came from Greece.

R: Yes we did. Let's back up. Mom has an aunt, or had an aunt, uh, Efadia Postopoulos <check spelling {207}> that was her father's sister. And she had a huge family. She was Efadia Diakakis, and then she married Postopoulos. And I forget Pappou's name.

A: You talking about Thea?

R: Yeah, Thea's husband first name, you ever knew that? It was just Pappou?

A: It was Theo, Pappou.

R: Was it Theo?

A: I thought it was Theo.

I: Theo means uncle right?

R: Oh yeah.

A: Oh, Maybe that's what it is.

R: That was it, yeah, and uh-

I: And this was your mother's-your uh-

A: Father's sister.

I: Your father's sister, Diakakis.

R: Yeah, she had it right, Diakakis and then she married Postopoulos.

A: And they changed their name to Post, because the boys in the family didn't want to be shackled with a long name.

R: Now there was what? Three sons and two daughters, right?

A: Mh-hm.

R: Any case they lived on Duboce Avenue, and we visited them. So there was a lot of Greek stuff going on there.

I: Because that's near where the church was, the Greek Church.

R: I don't know.

I: On Valencia Street.

A: Yeah, yeah.

R: Was it?

A: Uh-huh.

I: There was a lot of Greeks in that neighborhood.

A: Yeah. Thea, that's aunt isn't it? She used to do a lot of the baking.

I: For the Church?

A: For the Church.

R: I have a little memoir on that too.

A: And my father was very good at baking, bakery stuff.

I: Okay, we'll get to that in a few minutes.

A: Oh that's right, sorry.

R: <laughs> So anyway, I was around a lot of Greek then, because there was all these cousins and their wives, husband and further on down the line and their friends and so. There was a lot of Greek stuff going on at Thea's house. And then in New York there was not any Greek stuff going on.

A: No.

R: Before we went to New York though, we did have a dose of some Greek stuff in Southern California, because Aunt Bee married Thomas Thomas. Thomas Anthony Thomas, which it was, I think his original Greek name was Efmadiou. He was—he lived down in New Port Beach, a fishing town. He ran a fishing cannery there.

I: Oh!

R: Great guy. That's a story in itself. And so Bee moved down South and we visited at least once, twice maybe. I was sure it was twice, because I remember Uncle Tommy driving me down all the down Highway 1, through Pismo Beach and everything. And I had all kinds of new cousins from that side of the family. And some of them were even Basque, because uncle Tommy's sister married a Basque-heritage guy. And I became almost like brothers and sisters, Diane and I with these cousins, who originally lived in Daly City. I remember that time.

A: Yeah they did.

R: Yeah, so there's a lot of Greek stuff going on down there. This whole big Efmadiou family and all their husbands and wives and so on. So anyway we got to New York, came back, lived with Harry and Sophie for a little bit. Then we moved across the chasm there over to Mopey Street, near Courtland, just off Courtland.

I: Mh-hm.

R: And we lived there when I was going to Lowell, then we moved to Berkeley. And then I kind of just bummed around for a year. Almost got myself into trouble with a bad crowd, and Dad engineered getting me into the Navy. So I joined the navy when I was seventeen.

I: You didn't have any aspirations about going to college?

R: I knew I wasn't ready.

I: Did you feel like you weren't mature enough to be able to handle it?

R: I didn't know what I was or what I wanted, I was just really confused and at least the Navy was something. You know I knew all that music, I knew all that reading, but you know what the hell was good of that? I can't make a living out of it. So anyway I was an electronics technician in the Navy. Not a very good one, it didn't interest me, but I was smart enough to be one. I got out when I was twenty-one, and I was so angry with myself for sort of wasting my <telephone rings {252}>.

A: Let me check.

R: Sure.

I: We'll stop it for a second here.

R: So I decided that before I got out that I was going to go to San Francisco City College, live with Mom and Dad, who, by that time, had moved back to San Francisco. And to take the toughest curriculum that I could think of, and that was physics. So I took two years of physics there at San Francisco City College, and during that time I met a woman in that neighborhood, who became my second-uh—my first wife, Patricia Larson.

I: Patricia Larson, right.

R: Her mother's name was Griffin, before she married. She was going to San Francisco. She was in high school when I met here, and we married when I was twenty-two and she was eighteen. I had two children, but that's another story. Then I transferred to Berkeley and found out I didn't want to be a physicist. And got into public health, ultimately ended up in public health administration and hospital administration, graduated with a Masters degree in 1965 during the Free Speech Movement business.

I: You were at Berkeley at that time.

R: I was and it was very interesting.

I: Were you involved?

R: I was marginally. I didn't—I was not affectionate to the people who making trouble. On the other hand, the university acted like a jerk in denying the ability to set up these Free Speech tables, which had been there when my Dad was there, and he used to man them for his Socialist causes. I absolutely believed that's one this country's foundations is Free Speech. And even though I thought most of those Free Speech Rioters were a bunch of kooks, they had every right to be there. And for the university to shut it down for no stated reason! I thought it was outrageous! And so did everybody. But soon the left winged people took over,

because they're better organized than the right winged people, or the non-left winged people. <laughs>

I: Mh-hm, right.

R: I got myself in a committee to try to reconcile the two sides, and I told the professor who wanted me there, and I said, "Forget it. They don't want to reconcile. They just want to argue. I'm off the committee, it's worthless." I was graduated student at that time. But I was about to become a runner of organizations, hospital organization, and so I wanted to what I could learn from that. And what I learned is this: when there's trouble in your organization, don't hideout, go right in the middle of trouble and start talking with people. Defuse all the craziness, and then you can start talking with each other and reach some rational conclusion. And I thought the university just behaved miserably. But it certainly taught me how organized the left wing was. They had walkie-talkies. They had networks. Boy, they were just right on top of it. Boom! <snaps fingers> It was quite instructive.

I: And did your father go on the campus at all at that time?

R: No, I think he was-

I: He was busy with his work.

R: He was busy with his work. He had his own politics going on. He was the chapel chairman for his union at the Examiner. He was involved in union politics, and he was also on the board of the Health and Welfare Trust. And uh, yeah. Let's see.

I: So anyway let's finish up with your story, 'cause I want to talk a little about him.

R: Yeah, I went to Berkeley. And then uh-

I: Then you went to work?

A: The Navy, when did you go to the Navy?

R: Before.

I: Before that.

A: Oh.

R: And uh <coughs> Excuse me. Well then I got jobs at hospitals all over the state, and ultimately in Alaska a couple times. Got unmarried, got remarried, had three more kids. Got unmarried again, and here I am.

I: That's kinda quick <laughs>. Ready to go to Sweden, now.

R: Ready to go to Sweden, next year yeah.

I: I wanted to talk with the two of you about your reflections on you Greek heritage. And how—what your feelings are about that?

R: Yeah, when I was at Berkeley, I was mid-twenties. And I've always been a voracious reader, but at the time, this has nothing to with reading per se, I needed to understand my Greek roots. And so I happened upon this book by Kazantzakis. I forget, I think the first book I read by him was, it must have been *Zorba*, because I saw the film and then I read the book. And I was just enthralled with it. I read the book at least once every five years ever since. There are several books I read once every five years approximately. That's the only Greek oriented one, but then I read his *Last Temptations of Christ*, which blew my mind. We weren't raised a heavily Christian family, but we had Christian values. And so-uh, I wasn't put off by these speculations that he had about Christ. I took them—I think he treated Christ respectfully, although some people don't believe that, but that's my opinion. And I read his autobiography, which I had reread recently, and "Sister speak to me of God, and the almond tree blossomed," this haiku at Mount Athos with his friend as they were searching for the answers, and I love that haiku. I write haikus by the way.

I: Oh!

R: Among other things. Then I started looking into—um—I did a genealogy ultimately, and I have it in GED form by the way, if you want an electronic copy of it.

I: Yeah, that'd be great if you could send it to me.

R: I can get into onto a disk right here before you leave. And-um—Greekness.

I: So you started doing a genealogy of your family.

R: Yeah, and I did it. And I did go to Greece recently, I'm jumping around here time wise. After I met Eva, Eva Vernor is her name.

I: That's the woman who lives in Sweden?

R: Yes.

I: That you're going to marry?

R: Right. She and I decided one summer to meet in Greece. It's typical for Scandinavians to go to the Mediterranean during the summer. So, she took three

of her four children with her. That was the first time I had met—no. I had met her children before. So we met in the island of Kos, where Hippocrates had his-uh-
asclepeion. And that's the first time I had been to Europe. When I was in the Navy, I was in the Far East. And it reminded me very much of California, you know. The same climate, the same plant life.

I: Mh-hm. It's very similar.

R: The physiology seemed similar. I loved the Greek people. I felt just so at home there. It was just like family.

I: You couldn't speak any Greek though.

R: But I couldn't. But I'd looked <unintelligible{340}>. You know, people looked at me twice, because I looked sorta Greek.

I: Oh! <laughs>

R: Three-quarters Greek, I didn't look or act Greek. But I kinda look Greek. I didn't dress or act Greek, but I had the physiognomy. And I was pleasant and friendly, not like most of the tourists who just ignored the locals. You know, if I saw a guy or woman sitting on the porch in the sun or in the shade just looking out at the world, I say good morning or good afternoon, you know.

I: Did you learn any Greek at all?

R: Well, my grandfather was trying to teach me, you know. And he was successfully teaching me before we moved to New York. But I was not—that was the last time anyone mentored me, you know, in that, so.

I: So you don't really know any Greek at all?

R: No. Well I know spoken when I hear it.

I: Do you know the line, you can recognize it?

R: I know what is being spoken, and I pick out a few words here and there and the way it's spoken.

I: Did you go to the mainland too?

R: Uh, yes. And we went around a few islands and then stopped in Athens to visit a cousin whom I had met before, 'cause she had traveled here. Her name is Melpomeni Pavella. And she is world class dietitian and nutritionist, and has worked for the World Health Organization.

I: And speaks English.

R: Speaks English, yeah. She's visited us several times, and she travels all over the world and visits all her relatives and friends and so forth. So I had point to— And then, in the meantime I had discovered another cousin on the email. His name is Nestor Pavellas. And that's second cousin. And so he is also second cousin to Meni. And so Meni got together-

I: Melpomeni, right?

R: Melpomeni, yeah. So Meni got together all these second cousins, because my great-grandfather had five children. And that got down to my level. And uh one of them was a woman, and I didn't know that. I didn't know I had a great-aunt in the Pavellas side. And uh so he—her son is Stavros Doufexis, whose daughter Stella Doufexis is an opera singer with the Berlin Philharmonic. And he's into the arts and presentations of artistic ancient Greek, things like that and so forth. So anyway they were all there, and I spent the day eating and talking with these folks. I got a picture of all, the five, second cousins altogether. And it was a wonderful occasion.

I: Did you go to visit at all any villages where your ancestors came from?

R: I didn't have a chance at that trip. I intend to do that once I move to Sweden, because I'll be so close. My cousin Nestor did take me to the temple of Poseidon, which was very wonderful. I enjoyed it. Oh, beautiful there, the Mediterranean.

I: Fantastic isn't it.

R: Have you been there?

I: Yes.

R: So that's the Greek stuff as far as I can recollect at this point.

I: When you look at that part of your life and put into perspective, do you have any wishes that you had more of that kind of experience or less?

R: No, more. I wish I had been able to speak Greek. Dad rejected Greekness, which we can get into at some length. His mother was not Greek.

I: Why don't we start with your father then, now? And talk about him, because it's gonna be integral to this part of the conversation. So, give me some sense of his background as you recollect it.

R: He was born—his mother and father were very two different people from each other.

I: Just a second, he died last year.

R: He did, September 15th of 2000.

I: And he was?

R: 87.

I: So he was born in 1913. Is that right?

A: Yes.

R: And he was born in Greece. He was not Greek. That is to say, his parents were on a trip. They were residents—or his mother was a citizen of the U.S. His father was a citizen of Greece, but residing in the U.S. And they were on an extended trip to Greece when he was born.

I: Now your—his father was Alexander Pavellas?

R: Yes.

I: And he had come here to the United States in the turn of the century?

R: I don't know when.

I: Sometime around that time.

R: That's my guess based on the family history. And he, at that time, came here as the Acting Council General of Greece, to the best of my knowledge. And then according to what I heard Dad say, Alexander became disaffected with a new regime in Greece or got in the outs with them and decided at that point apparently to become an American, to stay in America at least. I know he intended to be an American by the way, because two years after he died, he got a certificate in the mail giving him residency status or uh citizenship.

I: So he applied for the citizenship.

R: Yes, he had, and I just discovered going through Dad's papers.

A: Is that so.

R: After he died. I didn't know that. I don't—I just <unintelligible {416}>.

I: No—but you're grandfather married uh Clara Lucille Har-

R: Harpending.

I: Harpending. H-A-R-P-E-N-D-I-N-G.

R: Correct.

I: And her name is Clara Lucille, but she is referred to as Lucille. And I think she has her own interesting story too.

R: Not only that, her father was a minor figure in California history.

I: Yes.

R: Are you familiar with *Great Diamond Hoax* and Asbury Harpending and all of that?

I: He's written several books. In fact, I went to the library and I found them you know when I heard about this. So he was a self-made millionaire and lost the fortune and made another one? Is that correct?

R: And lost it all. So anyway at the time, Lucille and Alexander met and I gather the family riches were still intact from the second fortune. So Lucille and her sister Genevieve, who we remember quite well 'cause she lived a long time, were spoiled rich daughters. Although nice people you know.

I: And Genevieve was also married to a Greek man.

R: Married to George D. Papageorge, granddad's business partner.

I: George D. Papageorge, if I remember correctly was the manager for Isadora Duncan's brother, Raymond Duncan?

R: That's what I just learned from what you gave me. I knew that Raymond Duncan was very important in the lives of these two women and they became enthralled with Ancient Greece.

I: In part through their Aunt, Isadora Duncan, the dancer.

R: Right, through Isadora Duncan was the sister to Raymond Duncan. So they were into that whole atmosphere of Ancient Greece, and by nature, Dad's mother, Lucille, was a scholar and aesthete. And she steeped in history and literature and poetry. She wrote her own Ancient Greek morbid poetry, which I have some by the way. I don't know what to do with it. Can I give it to you?

I: Mh-hm. I'd be glad to take it.

R: Are you okay with it Mom?

I: Or make a copy for us.

A: It was <unintelligible {448}>.

R: Well she-she-

A: She was an <unintelligible {449}> one.

I: Well you think about it. Let me know. You talk about it amongst yourselves about that.

R: Well the point that Mom's raising is that she ultimately developed deep melancholia at the time and ended up in Napa. And Dad was the person who committed her.

I: He had to commit his own mother.

R: He did. And he never, never got over it. Would you say that's a fair statement Mom?

A: Yes.

R: Never got over it.

I: Of course, that's a very traumatic thing to happen to you.

R: The guilt of it. He lived with the guilt of it for the rest of his life.

I: How old was he when that happened?

R: Twenty.

I: He was twenty-years-old?

R: His father, his mother, and his uncle all died within the same year, within a year. That's when he inherited the business and the whole world caved in. Then he met mom, and it made things better. Right?

<laughter>

I: You helped him. So at the age of twenty is when your father inherited this newspapers in the height of the depression.

R: Yes.

I: It was probably rocky ground then.

R: It probably was and Dad was by no means a businessman or was. He had no head for business having been raised by an aesthete and a literatum. Is that a word? I don't know.

I: It sounds pretty good to me.

R: Literati, I guess it has to be a literatum. <laughs>

I: That's right, that's singular. So that was your grandmother and your grandfather.

R: Yeah.

I: And then your grandfather died at a relatively young age.

R: I'm guessing around fifty, would you say Mom?

A: Yeah. He was young, I know that.

R: Yeah.

I: So you said there was three events. His father died, his mother had to—was committed to Napa.

R: And she died there, in the same year that her husband, his father died.

A: Alexander died.

I: So she died shortly after she lived there.

R: I guess so. I don't remember exactly how long she was there before she died.

I: And then the other—her sister is no longer living.

A: No.

R: Correct. That's Genevieve <name is said simultaneously with Artemis>. But she was totally different from uh-

I: Lucille.

R: Lucille. She was incorrigibly happy. <laughs>

<laughter>

I: When they passed on the genes, they didn't quite divide them up quite right.
<laughter>

I: One got all of one, one got the other.

R: And she was really very childlike for the rest of her life.

A: And she's very artistic.

R: Very artistic. We have a draw—is that her drawing that she did here? Is that hers?

A: Oh yeah.

I: Uh-huh.

R: And sort of like Grandma Mosses type. And uh she—Dad essentially supported her and her son Nestor.

I: Oh my, look at that. It's like an American primitive.

R: Yeah, that's what I was trying—the word I was to.

I: Isn't that lovely.

R: Yeah.

I: It's a picture with various lines and bushes and pots of flowers that are all different colors, predominately red and purple. Lovely.

R: And she collected things, newspaper—Everytime we moved Genevieve, we had to get rid of tons of newspapers. Oh it was awful.

I: Did she have family?

R: Uh, that's it. Her son Nestor.

I: Just Nestor.

R: And Nestor and she lived together until he married Timmy, a woman. Her real name is Evelyn, but her nickname is Timmy.

I: And they moved to Seattle?

R: Uh, no, that's his second wife. Timmy died about fifteen, twenty years ago. Her

original name was Thompson I think, a Norwegian out of Minnesota. And they didn't have any children. She was like a big sister to me. I loved her so much. We miss her deeply.

A: Who's that?

R: Timmy.

A: Oh.

R: Yeah.

I: That was Nestor's first wife.

A: Yes, lovely person.

<talking over each other>

R: Oh I got. I'll give my orbit for her, my eulogy, I should say. And uh, I'm wondering all over the map here. Could you help focus me?

I: Sure. Now we got—I got you off track when we were talking about Lucille and her sister. So now we're back to your—So at the age of twenty your father's father and his mother died.

R: And his uncle died.

I: And his uncle died.

R: He was close to his uncle I think.

I: Okay. And then, he inherited the newspaper, which his father began.

R: Right.

I: And there's enough history written about the newspaper before that time. So we don't need to go into that unless you want to.

R: The only thing I would want to say about. In the paper—and this where I need Mom's help. Oh, this is very important.

A: Wait a minute. Lucille and Genevieve and Papageorge and—

R: Let me help you.

I: It's a photograph. I'm going to stop the tape right now.

End of Tape 1, Side A.

Start of Tape 1, Side B.

{000}

I: Side two of the tape.

R: So as the newspaper faltered, as the editor, his name was Tzoumis. T-Z-O-U-M-I-S Uh, I don't know his first name. I guess they clashed, and Tzoumis, I'm assuming, being a much older man assumed the leadership mantle, which Dad didn't like. And I don't think he liked Tzoumis at all. And everything turned to crap at the paper. And there were other Greek people involved too, or he thought were involved. And he turned against the Greek community at that point, feeling that they had betrayed him, undermined him, and were not to be trusted and just hated them. Is that a correct statement Mom?

A: Yeah, I think that's right.

I: He was only twenty-years-old at the time.

R: Yeah, so he divorced himself from the Greek community.

I: Up until that time, he must've been very much involved in the community.

R: I would guess so, given his dad was so much involved.

I: Because his dad was the Acting Consulate General here.

R: And he was the leader of that Panhellenic Society too. And the head of AHEPA too, as far as I can recall.

I: And was his mother active?

R: Oh she was part of it, she was right into it. Yeah.

I: Until she got sick.

R: Yeah.

I: Okay, so then he must've been—had many close ties there.

R: And he severed them all.

I: Severed everything. Didn't have any contact at all.

R: Um, Mom?

A: But I know there was one Greek man, gave perspective. And he told him, who said give up the <unintelligible {015}>. Give up. Go back to college. Go back to college. Finish your college. Forget that business, it's no good now.

I: So did he go back to school?

A: He didn't.

R: He quit in his senior year. But it was in political science, so what the hell good was it anyway.

<laughter>

I: He was going to Berkeley.

R: Yes.

I: So he was a student in Berkeley when he got the paper.

R: That's right.

I: That's kind of a big burden for someone twenty-years-old.

R: Oh it was horrible.

I: And the father—his dad was not sick for a long time?

R: I don't know.

I: Do you know?

A: I don't know how long he was sick.

I: He had cancer if I remember.

R: He suffered.

I: It may have been sudden too.

R: He suffered terribly. Dad says, "I never want to suffer like that. Please give me something to kill me." Or he didn't say exactly that way, but that's what he meant, "If I should get in the same situation."

A: He asked me to. And I said, "I could never do it. I could never do it."

R: No, no.

I: And his mother, of course, was no help at all in that situation.

R: No, not at all. Do you remember the name of the fellow who told him to go back to college, Mom?

A: I don't. I wish I did.

I: If you can ever remember, let me know, and we'll put it as an addition to the tape.

A: I sure wish I could remember.

I: So he went to college and finished up, or didn't finish.

R: Didn't finish.

I: What did he do then?

R: Then he got in the newspaper, and he met Mom in Portland.

I: How did he go to Portland?

R: He was collecting uh the uh-

A: Newspaper.

I: Subscriptions?

R&A: Subscriptions.

I: For the Greek paper, the Prometheus.

A: Prometheus.

R: And he stopped in Portland, where Mom, her sisters and her dad were living at the time.

I: Okay.

R: And uh he had heard about these three sisters.

I: Mh-hm.

R: Why don't you tell that part of it, Mom?

A: Uh I'll wait.

I: She'll wait for her turn.

R: Oh, all right. So he met mom, they got married in two weeks and they kept on going, I guess. <laughter> All the way up to Canada and back.

I: Oh my. But then he came—shortly after he got back here is when the paper collapsed, or he lost.

R: I guess that must've been it. Yeah.

A: Yeah.

I: So then you're father did a variety of different kinds of jobs.

R: A variety of things. I don't know. Yeah, he worked for a photography-processing place owned by a man named Carski, whom he hated. He had a lot of hate in him. He felt betrayed by a lot of things in life.

I: Early on.

R: You know, he started out one way, and it all turned out another. I mean he started out as a-

I: Was it difficult for him to work through all those disappointments and the awful things that happened.

R: He was Greek boy poet, there's a book in praise of his son that was published under his name.

I: Oh really.

R: I have it upstairs.

I: Huh.

R: I'll lend it to you.

I: Okay.

R: And he was raised to be-

I: How old was he when he published that book of poetry?

R: His mother was the one that did of course. But he was like eight or nine.

I: Oh. But his name was—appeared as the author, and she wrote most of the poetry.

R: I would guess so. Wouldn't you say so?

A: I would think so. 'Cause he never wanted it-

R: He hated that book. He threw it away! I was so angry with him. He threw it away. He threw away so much stuff.

A: He had the most beautiful photograph of himself. Great big thing. And he left it in one of the houses; he wouldn't take it with us.

R: He just had a miserable past, his childhood; he had a very odd childhood.

I: Do you think some of that behavior was inherited from his mother?

R: It's possible. Yeah, he tended toward depression.

I: On the edge of depression, like that?

A: My daughter tried to tell him, "Come on, take something for it, we're all taking pills with you, you're the one that needs it."

<laughter>

I: So anyway he was the kind of <unintelligible {046}> person.

R: I think there is a tendency in the family toward the bipolar. His mother, him, my sister, and I, we all had a little touch of it. And we all deal with it in various ways.

I: Looks like he's fine. <laughs>

R: Yeah. Some of the great geniuses in the world were bipolar.

I: Like a second <unintelligible {048}>

R: Yeah, he was mostly on the downside of the bipolar.

I: Was he like that most of his life? Did you remember him then?

A: Well, I can tell you, in my married life, he was depressed most of the time. But I know the world is tough. The world was tough and he was hard of hearing.

I: So then he pretty much cut off his ties with any Greek people after that.

R: With almost any people, except his political friends in various places he was at, like the union or the neighborhood in Daly City, which he was very active in.

I: Did he become a full-blown Socialist?

R: No, he kind of drifted away from that. When he left San Francisco, he left the Socialist Labor Party behind. He never joined another party after that.

I: Okay.

R: He was active later in the democratic politics, which shows you that the Democratic Party is really socialist. <laughs> Of course in Europe, that's not a bad word, there's all kinds of democratic socialists. In fact my bride-to-be was once a young communist. <laughs>

I: So anyway, your dad had the newspaper for short period of time. Then just ran into a lot of difficulties in his life. And finally when you came, he went to New York, and then he came back, and that's when he settled in at the Examiner?

R: Yes, for a number of years. And uh he did an excellent job there. He was an excellent craftsman, very proud of his work, always excellent. And as time went on you could see the deterioration in the attitude and quality of the workers that he was representing as a union official began to trouble him quite a bit. Do you recall that Mom?

A: Yes.

R: And when the computer business started coming along, he said, "I'm getting out just in the right time." 'Cause it was time for him to retired, and that's when computerized type setting and other ways of presenting-

I: So he was retired for a number of years then?

R: Yeah, he retired at age—at what age Mom?

A: About sixty-three—uh.

R: Early, sixty-two I guess.

A: Yeah, sixty-two or sixty-three.

I: And did he do anything in his retirement?

A: He was in the politics. He was in the ODCPA then. He got involved in that. That's what made him stop-

I: I'm sorry? I don't know what that is.

R: The Original Daly City Protective Association.

A: He was trying to save the homes from redevelopment.

R: BART ended near his-

I: Oh! Okay, an anti-BART building project.

R: Yes, and he won. He beat City Hall.

I: He did.

R: Yeah, and they're trying to do it again now. So they called us out. They said, "Can you give us any materials?" And I have whole huge scrapbook upstairs of materials, lovingly done by one of his associates, a whole history of the Original Daly City Protective Association. And I'm going to be meeting some of those people later today. I want to give it to the California Historical Society.

I: Yeah, or to the Daly City Public Library.

R: Um.

I: If the historical society won't take it, that would be the place for it to go.

R: Okay.

I: Have you have any of union things of your father's time?

R: Like what?

I: Doc—did he have diaries? Or any kinds of papers from the union that he was at?

R: You've been through his papers recently, Mom. Uh?

A: Oh.

I: The reason I was leading to suggest is that the Labor Archives at San Francisco State, there's a special separate library called the Labor Archives Library.

R: I'll look through them.

I: If there's anything of interest there.

R: I'll forward them to you, and then you'll know.

I: I'll take care of sending them.

R: Okay.

I: I don't know if they'll accept them or not. But I can at least try. Okay, so that pretty much takes care of one side of the Pavellas family. So were looking at the mockup of the San Francisco Chronicle April 30th 1977 that says "Conrad Retires". Let me read what the little piece says here:

Conrad Pavellas of the Daly City was appointed Tuesday by the Board of Supervisors to serve in San Mateo County Planning Commission. Pavellas will replace Kenneth Sturm, who will step down May 1st. Supervisor Fred Lyon recommended Pavellas for the appointment citing his long-standing involvement in local and regional issues. "Pavellas," Lyon said, "had served on various Daly City advisory committees and has been a member of the Association of Bay Area Governance (ABAG)."

According to the Board Policy, terms of office of Planning Commissioners expire when the supervisor from whose district they are appointed leave office. Sturm was appointed by former supervisor, Jean Fraser, in December 1970. Fraser retired from the board last January. Fred Lyon replaced her. Lyon told the board Tuesday that he had requested Sturm to remain on the board until May 1st, at which time he would recommend a replacement.

So, you're father did serve on the Planning Board.

R: He did. And I got it mixed up. That was his retirement from the Planning Commission, not from the Chronicle.

A: Oh, I see.

R: Yeah.

I: Okay. So this is referring to his appointment to the Planning Committee.

R: Appointment to the Planning Commission.

I: So he served on that planning commission until that supervisor stepped down that appointed him.

R: Apparently so, yeah.

I: Okay. Was this before or after his involvement with the BART?

R: That arose out of it. As-

I: As a result of his work with BART. Trying to get them not build, build it up.

R: And he was successful. And they're trying it again. They got a new group trying to stop them.

I: And he must've been happy with that accomplishment.

R: Yes, he was very proud of it, very proud of it.

I: Something that was successful, that turned out the way he wanted to.

R: Yes, yes.

I: Okay, I'm going to end this interview now. And I was wondering if there are any other things that you'd like to share before we finish it up.

R: Offline, I could show you that scrapbook that's <unintelligible {102}>.

I: All right. Any other comments that you'd like to make?

R: Not right now. Kind of played out, but maybe I'll butt in as your talking to Mom.

A: I'll need your help, honey.

I: Well I want to thank you very much for your time.

R: I'm delighted.

End of interview.

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